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Street, a noted restaurant and resort of Bohemians, and read what he had written. He came with about half his effort, and for three-quarters of an hour the party was, literally, in a roar. He called it "A Lecture About Ghosts," and no small part of the fun was that there was not a word about ghosts in it. The next day he finished it, and then the question was to bring it out. I knew an actor, and sometimes manager, by the name of De Walden, then part of the old Wallack company, who had some money, and I managed to get him interested. He took Niblo's saloon, now the dining-room of the Metropolitan Hotel, for one night, with the privilege of six. The first night, with the help of the press, who were all friends of Artemus, was a triumph, and he ran the week, clearing for himself and his manager \$4,200. From that time his lecturing was a grand success, and, while Artemus was more than liberal, he saved money, or, rather, he made it so fast that he could not help its accumulating in his hands. He died worth almost a hundred thousand dollars, of which he left the income to his aged mother, and, after her death, to found an asylum for old and disabled printers, to which craft he originally belonged.

J. W. WATSON.

#### IV.

##### INTERVIEWING AS A FACTOR IN JOURNALISM.

I SUPPOSE it has fallen to the lot of every American newspaper man whom pleasure or business has taken to England within the past dozen years, either to hear discussed or to take part in a discussion concerning the possibility of starting and carrying through to success in London a newspaper conducted according to American methods. Such a venture, indeed, has lately been set on foot by the proprietor of a New York paper, and no little curiosity as to the outcome is expressed in journalistic circles. For my own part, however, I have seldom heard what seems to me a correct view of the situation expressed even by men of far more than my own knowledge and experience.

It never seems to have occurred to them that in America news is far more easily collected, inasmuch as, outside the newspaper offices and their staffs, a vast army of helpers exists in the shape of the public itself. The foundation, as it were, of all news in this country is the interview; our people are one and all, from the rich merchant and professional man down to the humble inhabitant of Avenue A, ready and willing to be interviewed at any time and on any pretext. For the benefit of those unlearned in newspaper routine, let me point out the usual fashion in which a piece of news, police or otherwise, is "written up."

First, we will suppose a bare announcement of some fact, important in its way, arrives at the desk of the city editor from police headquarters or other official source. "A dead body has been found at such or such an address"; or a simple death notice: "At such or such a number Fifth Avenue, John Brown, of heart disease, aged seventy-nine." Reporters are at once sent out with the slip containing this news, and with a few words of instruction from the city editor. They proceed to interview in every direction. Friends, relatives, neighbors, officials of every degree, are quickly put through brief cross-examinations. Seldom is the least difficulty experienced by a reporter of fact in getting civil answers to his leading questions, and these answers form the skeleton of his "story." The interviews are not quoted; probably the names of the persons interviewed are never mentioned; for the account is put in purely narrative form. It is, then, these unquoted interviews which are the real news, as we see them recast and condensed in the columns of the daily papers.

In England other methods prevail. Men of the upper classes, in particular, would resent as impertinence the visit to their private houses of newspaper reporters at all times and seasons; the lower classes would suspiciously refuse to answer when questioned, unless by the authorities. In New York it often falls to the lot of a reporter to ring vigorously the bell of a stately mansion and rouse up the master of the house, who, in his *robe de chambre*, half sleepily, but wholly civilly, gives such information as lies in his power. Across the Atlantic, imagination fails to conceive the reporter's probable reception under similar circumstances.

This, then, I take it, is the chief obstacle in the way of the bold man who has started a paper in England, if he endeavors to gather his news in the prevalent American fashion. As to the relative values of the two systems of news-gathering—the English, which trusts simply to official sources, and gives the bare facts in all unimportant cases, and the American, which is based on the principle that, under the most apparently commonplace statement may lurk a world of interesting detail, only to be learned by close questioning of all concerned—I shall offer no opinion. I can only say that it seems to me to be a question of news or no news, with the odds in favor of the former.

HORACE TOWNSEND.

## V.

### TURKISH FREETHINKERS.

THE progress of free thought is not altogether confined to the lands of the North-Caucasian nations. In the cities of Japan, the name of a Buddhist zealot has become a by-word, as odious as "Jesuit" in its latter-day significance, and the private creed of educated Turks is generally a vague theism, strongly tinged with agnosticism. In the bookstores of Constantinople, skepticism in its most pronounced types forms the staple of conversation. The Padisha himself (like Mohammed the Second and the Caliph Al Motadi) is well known to be a rationalist; and a correspondent of the *Pesther Lloyd* describes a soirée at the residence of a Syrian pacha who entertained his guests with anecdotes à la Mary Montagu, quizzing the ulemas and the superstitions of the orthodox peasantry. *Meshdàn*—literally an epileptic, a person gaining influence by pretended fits of religious ecstasy—is a sort of freemasonry term which an investigator found to apply to no less a personage than the Prophet himself, and which metropolitan Moslems often use with a chuckling irreverence that would delight the soul of Colonel Ingersoll. "If Mufti Meshdàn had revealed the secret of breech-loading six-shooters, instead of his ordinance of six daily prayers," remarked the impious Syrian, "we could still smoke our pipes on the ramparts of Buda, and probably on the Alcazar of Toledo."

A. L. FRANCIS.

## VI.

### GEOGRAPHICAL DELUSIONS.

THERE is a story of a Spanish artist who decorated the church of his native town with a fresco, depicting the "Siege of Jerusalem," and exhibiting the camp of a Roman army with a battery of heavy siege-guns. That anachronism, however, is matched by the blunder of numerous modern painters, who insist on representing the landscapes of biblical and classic geography with long ranges of treeless mountain-chains; for there is no doubt that up to the beginning of our chronological era the coast-lands of the Mediterranean were covered with magnificent forests. The writings of the ancient classics abound with allusions to the "sylvan solitudes of Arcadia," the "wild beasts of the Numidian forests," the "shaggy woods of Mount Ætna," and the "wood-covered slopes of the Apulian highlands" (the southern Apennines). The Bible speaks of the woods of Bashan and Lebanon, of sacred groves in the land of the Canaanitish idolaters; and even southern Syria teemed with cities and hamlets that can have supported their inhabitants only on a basis of abundant vegetation. The Hebrew synonym of "desert," indeed, means a "wilderness," rather than a sand-waste; and in western Asia and northern Africa, vast territories, now as void of life as the lava-fields of the moon, were once as fertile as the garden-lands of our southern Alleghanies.

The author of "Exile Life in Siberia" has exploded an idea that Asiatic Russia is nothing but a snow-covered steppe; but the "Dying Continent," too, deserves a better opinion. According to the estimates of Professor Bassières, of the Belgian exploring party, Western Africa, south of Lake Tschad, still contains more than a million square miles of almost continuous forests, not to mention the park-like hill-country